1:Haskins K-4,5 (1952-1954)1956 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11

494 lesser extent, of goods-carrying busses. Another delay in movement of
493 goods results from frequent breakdowns. A large number of broken down trucks are to be seen along the side of any of the highways of the Recôncavo. The most direct cause of these breakdowns is the universal practice of heavily overloading trucks--extra springs and blocks have been added so that they can carry enormous loads, but frequently the axles and tires fail on the rough roads. A contributing factor in the breakdowns is probably the scarcity and high cost of new parts.

Many merchants, buyers, and prosperous farmers make use of an additional passenger service which is provided between the urban centers of the region by automobiles in what might be described as a combination limousine and zone taxicab service. These taxicabs wait in a conspicuous spot, usually near the square of the city, with their destination and the total fare for the trip painted on the windshield. A perspective rider may pay the entire fare himself, wait for others who will share the expense, or himself secure other passengers. The fares are standardized, and the system is particularly oriented toward the important markets of the region.

505 The centrally located Baía de Todos os Santos and its estuaries are very important in the transport of both goods and people within the Recôncavo. A most conspicuous and universal sight is the myriad of sailing vessels which transport large quantities of agricultural products across the Bay to Salvador. There is no way of estimating the importance of this traffic in relation to the total amount of goods carried, but the vessels (saveiros) can hold as much as four or five [501] tons of cargo. These boats are heavy timbered, open decked sailing vessels with a single mast—they do not sail well except before the wind, and therefore their trips are timed according to the direction of the wind. The saveiros seem to be very hardy and able to survive

It must be remembered that these figures include the capital city, the population of which is about 450,000. If this is subtracted from the total population of the Recôncavo, the average density of the Recôncavo is approximately 27 persons per square kilometer.

Vila Recôncavo, the community of this study, is part of a county located 41 kilometers across the bay from Salvador. The community includes the town of Vila Recôncavo, which is the county seat, and the surrounding rural zone. Throughout the study we will be dealing with these two components of the sugar-cane plantation community, sometimes separately and sometimes together.

The only public transportation to the town is by boat from the capital, a three-hour trip across the bay, threading through numerous islands. The major part of the trip is made on remarkably blue water, usually serenely calm but occasionally violently agitated, especially during the winter. One-, two-, and three-masted sailing vessels and an occasional large sailing canoe, the centuries-old methods of transportation in Bahia, are passed on their way into the city, carrying fruit, vegetables, pottery, firewood, fish, tobacco, manioc flour, and sugar to the more than four hundred thousand people of the city, as they have done since the early colonization of the Recôncavo. The only new element in the scene is the small diesel boat which makes the trip back and forth across the bay, outward bound one day and returning the next with the outgoing tide.

As the boat nears the luxuriantly green, palm-crested islands, stopping at several to discharge the mail, passengers, and "city goods," one becomes aware of the feeling of stepping back into the past. Barefoot children are selling oranges, peanuts, and fish; and parrots and parakeets, sometimes doped with rum to make them appear tame. The mailman on the dock receives the sack of mail and gives it to his helper to carry to the post office; the island priest may receive a message or package entrusted to the captain of the boat or may even go aboard to travel to the church on another island. The others on the dock call to friends on the boat and exchange news or else simply watch the activity of docking the boat and the casting off. The people of the islands are light-skinned, although well sunburned. Many of them are vacationers from the city, dressed in brightly colored clothes, for the islands are well-known resorts. The others, barefoot, wearing shorts

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The others, barefoot, wearing shorts and large-brimmed straw hats, are the permanent dwellers of the islands: fishermen, stevedores, and storekeepers.

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When the islands are left behind, the scene begins to change. The color of the water changes from a clear, deep blue to a muddy gray. Groups of canoes are seen, their occupants busy with their fish nets, for this shallow part of the bay is a good fishing ground. Once again the mainland is close, rolling hills covered with a thousand shades of green--sugar cane, the crop which ~~nearly four~~ hundred years ago replaced the virgin forests. The deltalike shores of this part of the bay are covered with mangue, muddy areas with low-growing trees which at high tide are standing in the water. On a hill at the water's edge is the town of Vila Recôncavo, a town of 1,462 persons. The first thing one sees is the huge Franciscan convent[5] with its two tall towers and its royal palms. Approaching the long dock which juts out into the water, one can see almost the whole town, which is built on three hills and in the valleys between them.

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The arrival of the boat from Salvador every other day is an event in an otherwise dull day. Nearly all the men of the town go down to the dock to meet the boat, to see who is traveling, to see what is arriving for someone in the town, to receive messages or parcels, to greet friends, and to gossip. The postmistress is there, and with her the man whose duty it is to carry the mail sack, but who has a helper to do it for him. After a few minutes the boat continues its journey, and the townsfolk walk back along the dock, breaking up into small groups on reaching the main square and then each going his own way.

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On the square at the end of the dock, at the foot of the main street which leads up the middle hill and out into the

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5. It should be explained that "convent" in this case is a direct translation from Portuguese. In Portuguese, convent does not have the connotation of being a religious establishment only for women. The word convento is applied to the Franciscans' establishment because the Franciscans are not monks; if they were, their establishment would be called a mosteiro (monastery). In English, Franciscans are known as "friars," and their houses are called "friaries." However, throughout this monograph the direct translation, convent, is used.

country beyond, is a large, colonial, two-story building--the county courthouse (prefeitura), the official center of local county administration. With heavily barred windows on the ground level, it also serves as the county jail. At the top of the hill is a large church, the mother church of the parish of São Roque. On the right, on top of another hill, is the imposing Franciscan convent. The main street of the town is narrow, paved with cobblestones and lined by old colonial houses in various stages of repair. To the left one sees the "beach," which at low tide is an expanse of ugly black mud, typical of the shores of this back part of the bay. The long dugout canoes of the fishermen are anchored there and rest on the bottom when the tide is out.

As the boat sails away and the townspeople go about their business, the streets empty, and a peculiar hush, which is characteristic of Vila Recôncavo, falls over the town. There is an atmosphere not so much of sleepiness and inertia as of decadence, as though life had already passed by. The few people who remain somehow seem to be left over from something in the past. The houses which face the main street are somber, their façades going straight up two stories from the street, their windows shuttered. Some of them are crumbling, the mortar falling away, exposing the stone of which they are built; others are in complete ruin. All of them are turning black from the constant exposure to humid salt air, and moss is growing on the walls where the sun never strikes.

From the top of the hill, in front of the mother church, there is a magnificent view of the Bay of All Saints, and it is easily understood why this place was chosen 332 years ago as the site for a new town. This part of town is the old Vila Recôncavo (see map of town), dating back to a time when the settlement was the only administrative center of inland colonial Bahia. Upon this hill and the one on which the convent stands, the elite of the sugar lands built their town houses called sobrados. Once upon a time these streets with their stepping-stones were the scene of colonial opulence, of sedan chairs carried by liveried slaves, of soldiers in uniform, of ladies wearing gloves and carrying parasols. Today this old part of Vila Recôncavo is inhabited by simpler people, the town's upper class, who eke out a living in the local bureaucracy, or as merchants, or as representatives of the state and federal governments. They are quiet, gentlemanly people trying to keep up a semblance of dignity, a feat which becomes more difficult all the time.

VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Town Life]

is very rough, though strong. Most of the men complain about it, for it cuts their hands when they are fishing and the action of salt water on the cuts inflames their hands badly.

There are between seventy-five and one hundred canoes in Vila Recôncavo, of all sizes, from 16 to about 50 feet long. They come from the southern part of the state, and cost between Cr$1.000,00 and Cr$6.000,00 apiece, depending on their size. They are made of vinhatico preto, a large tree from which an entire canoe can be hollowed out. As the canoes grow older, they are strengthened inside by the addition of ribs. The center support (pé do banco) has a hole in it through which a mast can be stepped for sailing. The fishermen use a variety of sails, but usually a simple square sail called traquête. Four flour sacks sewn together make a passable square sail. The canoes last a long time and are handed down from generation to generation. A hundred years is not an uncommon age for such a craft.

The majority of fishermen cannot swim well and have a great respect for the water on two counts: the water is deep, which to them implies danger, and it is said to hide large, man-eating fish. There are stories of three men who have disappeared in the last few years, snatched away by fish. One was a baixador, and the other two fell overboard. Falling is not uncommon, for often a man steps on a small fish on the bottom of the canoe or simply slips on the wet wood, loses his balance, and goes overboard, as the canoes are narrow-beamed and unstable. In their canoes they are fearless, and will go anywhere in any weather. Severe storms which arise suddenly are ridden out in the canoe, which generally lies at anchor while the men lie under cover of the sail, peering out occasionally to see if the weather is clearing. Many of them, however, become violently ill on a larger boat during a storm.

Winter is the most productive season for fishing, although the most uncomfortable. There are many storms, and the rains are more or less constant. But the fishermen say that the mixture of salt water with the fresh water from small rivers emptying into the bay seems to produce many more fish than in the summer months. The fishermen dress only in a pair of shorts and a straw hat when fishing, and remain in the cold rain for hours on end. Colds are common among them, as is rheumatism among the older men.

There is always a market for fish. There is a discussion currently going on in Vila Recôncavo, for some of the older

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
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put many beads of O Senhor do Bomfim on him, and a *figa;* they covered him with ornaments.

The *figa* is to free one from the evil eye. For example: I have a dress. You think it is pretty, and you want it very much; something then happens to it. Or a *sabiá*[40] sings beautifully. You are visiting its owner; you want it, you want it very badly. You leave, and it dies or something else happens to it because you cannot have it. This is the evil eye. One needs to "pray it away" with *Guiné, Arruda,* or *Vassourinha Doce.* An oxhorn in the garden will keep it away from plants.

Then the man went around with hands folded, "taking the blessing" from everyone there. Seven children went out with lighted candles. Then he got up entirely well. Today he has a *casa de candomblé.* He is now very old. His *orixá* is Ogum de Gêge. The *pao de santo* who treated him is of Ogum de Mina.

My guardian angel [*anjo de guarda*] is Xangô. Ogum is a soldier, Xangô is of the thunder and also of the lightning. He is Santa Barbara of the Irmandade. All the *orixás* are equal. But Oxalá directs everything. Nanan is his wife. In the Gêge language she is called Odé.

My sister, she died, burned up. She caught all on fire. He who killed her is Oxóssi; it was he who killed her. My sister is buried in the Quinta dos Lazaros.[41] She burned to death because she disobeyed him. He sent a message and she paid no attention to it. Her husband had a *saveiro.*[42] Every trip which he made she went along in the boat. She had no children. Everywhere he went, she went too. When, one time, the *orixá* "arrived" and told her that she should not travel on the water, she didn't take his words very seriously; she laughed the matter off, "gave it a *muxóxó.*" But about a week afterward, she went with her husband in a *saveiro* across the Bay to Bahia. Between Itaparica and Salinas the *saveiro* caught afire. It had powder on it and the powder exploded. Parts of the *saveiro* were ripped off and hurled into the water. She was surrounded by fire. When they finally reached her, she was badly burned. They brought her to the Santa Isabel Hospital,

[40] A Brazilian bird which can be trained to sing tunes.

[41] A Bahian cemetery.

[42] A sturdy sailboat used on Todos os Santos Bay and its contributory rivers to transport light articles of commerce.